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SUBJECT: INDIA'S MAOIST MENACE GROWS

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KOLKATA 00000144 001.2 OF 005

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Recent large scale attacks by Maoist insurgents in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and other states reflect growing Maoist strength and organization in India. Mostly operating under the banner of the Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist), India's Maoists now maintain a significant presence in approximately 25% of the districts in nine states extending from the Nepal border in the North to the state of Karnataka in the South. The common link between Maoists in the different states remains an ideology of violent struggle against corrupt local governments unable (or unwilling) to address fundamental social needs. The distinction between Maoists as a political movement versus a criminal extortion rackets is blurred, but they remain a serious security threat. The GOI has called high-level meetings in response to the recent surge in Maoist attacks on law enforcement officials and politicians, but still lacks a clear strategy.

¶2. (SBU) Summary Continued. While coordination between Nepali and Indian Maoists has been limited, significant links exist. Senior Nepali Maoist leaders such as Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPNM) Politburo Members Chandra Prakesh Gajurel and Mohan Baidya and over 200 other CPNM cadres have been arrested in India. The two organizations have issued joint press releases expressing mutual solidarity and according to Kolkata-based Nepali diplomats and law enforcement officials in Bihar, have shared weapons, some training and support. In addition, recent attacks along the Indo-Nepal border suggest increasing spillover from Nepal into India.

¶3. (SBU) Summary Continued. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has characterized the Maoist insurgency as India's greatest internal security threat. The lack of GOI awareness and response should not be taken as the measure of the threat. Rather, it reflects the GOI's inability to recognize and address the underlying social issues that fuel the insurgency. India remains a country with almost 600 million people living on less than USD 2 a day and successive Indian governments have failed to take their concerns into account or devise genuine poverty reduction programs. Unlike Islamic terrorists, outside forces cannot be conveniently blamed for the existence of the Maoist terror. End Summary.

Background: The Naxalite/Maoist Movement in India

¶4. (SBU) In May 1967, Charu Mazumdar, launched an armed struggle on behalf of landless peasants near the town of Naxalbari in West Bengal's Darjeeling district, the town's name gave rise to the term "Naxalite." The Naxalbari uprising revived a tradition of revolutionary activities going back to the struggle for independence from British Rule. Naxalites at the time argued that this revolutionary tradition - for which Bengal was especially known - had been corrupted by the revisionist Communist Party of India (CPI) and its offshoot the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM). Mazumdar went on to engineer a split in the CPM by forming the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) in 1969 (Note: The CPI-ML renounced violent revolution in 1971 and was recognized by the Election Commission of India as a legal political party in 1974. CPI-ML has been active recently in the protests against acquisition of rural land for industrial development. However, CPI-ML still retains ties to Naxalite cadres. In some ways the relationship between the CPI-ML and the Naxalites parallels that between the Irish Republican Army and the Sinn Fein political party in Northern Ireland. End Note.)

¶5. (SBU) The Naxalite movement was crushed in the early 1970s by the then Congress government of Siddharth Shankar Ray in West Bengal and Charu Mazumdar died in police custody in Calcutta in ¶1972. Over 10,000 Naxalites were killed, and thousands more jailed. The CPI (ML) underwent further splits, and several small groups broke off from the CPI(ML). Today the Naxalites' common goal is peasant revolution, abolition of class hierarchies, and the expansion of "liberated zones." Naxalites typically operate in tribal forest areas, both to advance the cause of marginalized tribes and to take advantage of the inhospitable terrain to evade law enforcement, but they

KOLKATA 00000144 002.2 OF 005

eventually hope to expand their activities throughout the countryside. In the revolution's final phase, Naxalites hope to take over the cities before bringing down the government in New Delhi.

¶6. (SBU) The dominant Naxalite groups before September 2004 were the People's War (PW) and the Maoist Community Center (MCC). The PW, formed in Andhra Pradesh in 1975, was originally known as the People's War Group but shortened its name to People's War earlier that year after merging with the CPI -ML (Party Unity) faction. The MCC was founded in the early 1970s in Jharkhand by Naxalites escaping from West Bengal. Much of the conflict between these two groups derived from turf battles rather than ideological differences. They merged on September 21, 2004 to form what is presently known as the Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist). As such, "Naxalites" and "Maoists" are both now general terms applied to ultra Left-wing political groups that carry out armed attacks against symbols of state authority to attain political objectives and the terms are used interchangeably. Maoists/ Naxalites trace their ideology to Mao Zedong's theory of peasant insurrection, subscribing to the notion that "power flows from the barrel of a gun," and seek to establish "liberated zones of deprived and alienated sections of the population."

"The Red Corridor"

¶7. (SBU) According to April 2006 GOI estimates, at present, 160 out of 602 districts in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are affected by Maoists. These districts contain about 450 police which reported incidents of violence between 2004 and 2006. There are another 50-odd districts where Maoist

groups have extended their influence/activity, but statistics of attacks have not been submitted in these areas. These districts fall in the above nine states as well as Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In all, Maoist activities have been reported from 1,200 police stations in India. Nearly 6,000 people have been killed in Maoist violence in India during the past twenty years. According to the Indian government, more than 3,000 of these deaths occurred between 2002 and March 2006.

¶8. (SBU) The Dantewara district in southern Chhattisgarh has become India's hub for Maoist violence. Escalating combat between government, insurgent, and tribal counter-insurgent forces has killed 542 persons since the beginning of 2006, which is in excess of casualties in Jammu and Kashmir. The state government has a two-pronged offensive underway to combat the Maoists. First, the state is attempting to transform its police force into a paramilitary unit. All state police officers are being put through a six week program at Chhattisgarh's Jungle Warfare Training College in Bastar District. Second, the state has provided support and encouragement to a grassroots counter-insurgency known locally as Salwa Judum. This movement pits the Maoists against the very people they purport to protect and puts the so-called Maoist revolutionaries in a difficult situation, and one to which they have responded very violently. The Maoists are now killing local tribal people and villagers who they suspect might be aligned with Salwa Judum. As a result, southern Chhattisgarh is home to at least twenty-seven Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, as tribal people flee or are forcibly removed from their forest villages by both Maoist and counter-insurgent forces. Based upon interviews of GOC officials IDP numbers are estimated to be in excess of 60,000.

¶9. (SBU) In Eastern India, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal are the most affected states. The CPI (Maoist) runs virtual parallel governments in many parts of Jharkhand, and holds "Jan Adaalats" (Peoples' Courts) in Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand to settle both civil and criminal disputes in remote villages. These "courts" impose penalties ranging from simple monetary fines to mutilation and death. Local district government authorities, security persons and lately some CPM leaders in southern districts of West Bengal are the primary targets of CPI (Maoist) assassinations. (Comment: In West Bengal, the CPM and more traditional Naxalites like the CPM-ML are seen by Maoists as corrupted by the establishment and as ideological competitors for the sympathies of the masses. End Comment). In some districts, Maoists have replaced the local

KOLKATA 00000144 003.2 OF 005

administration and police and government officials do not enter.

The Maoists define these areas as "liberated zones." These Maoist-dominated areas are usually geographically remote and mired in poverty. Many have suffered from traditional neglect by the government and have been ruled by quasi feudal landed elites, who have traditionally exploited the general population.

The presence of Maoists makes it difficult for government authorities to establish or re-establish a presence.

¶10. (SBU) Media reports quoting GOI intelligence sources say that the Maoists are well funded (\$350 million a year). Their sources of funding include: extortion, kidnapping for ransom, collection of "taxes" from NGO's and other conducting development programs or those transporting agricultural/minor forest produce and minerals through their territory. Bank robberies and looting of stores are also common tactics. The GOI puts the total estimated number of hardcore underground Maoist members in the affected states at 9,300 - a significant increase from 2004 (2,165 recruited) and 2003 (831 recruited). However, media estimates put the figure significantly higher at around 30,000. Top leaders include CPI (Maoist) General Secretary Ganapathi, Pramod Mishra, Uma Shankar, Nathuni Mistry

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and Kishen. Nathuni Mistry has been in a Jharkhand jail since

¶2003.

"No More Hit and Run . . . Hit Them Precisely and With Impunity"
-- CPI (Maoist) 9th Congress

¶11. (SBU) In January-February 2007, the Maoists held a "9th Unity Congress" (the first since 1970 during the old Naxalbari period) somewhere in the forest area along the Orissa-Jharkhand border. An official statement, signed by CPI (Maoists) General Secretary Ganapathi and released on February 19 announced the

SIPDIS

intention to conduct a more aggressive campaign by conducting people's war throughout the country, changing the name of the Maoist Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), deepening its mass base, and waging a militant mass movement against the "neo-liberal policies of globalization, liberalization and privatization pursued by ruling classes on the dictates of imperialists." Journalist contacts reported that Ganapathi, while addressing the hardcore Maoist leaders from across the country, said, "No more hit and run. Now, the time has come to spread into the towns, identify specific targets and attack them with precision." (See 9th Congress Press release at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/19feb07.htm>)

¶12. (U) The Indian Home Ministry Report for 2006-2007 confirmed the more aggressive tactics, noting that Maoists have resorted to "tactical counter offensive campaigns." Following the Maoist's 9th Congress, there has been a demonstrable increase in violence in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand. In April, approximately 100 Maoists blew up schools being used as barracks for the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and an undisclosed number of Maoists killed two Railway Protection Force (RPF) soldiers on the Howrah-Mokama train. Near the Nepali border on March 31, approximately 200 Maoists, possibly with support from Nepal, attacked a police station, bank and government office in the town of Riga (Reftel A).

¶13. (SBU) On March 4, CPI (Maoist) militants in Jharkhand shot and killed Member of Parliament Sunil Mahto from Jamshedpur (Reftel B). Mahto was a member of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) party, a state party with a large base among the poor and tribal sectors. The CPI-Maoists have also threatened the Deputy Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Sudhir Mahto, and two members of the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly. According to media reports, the Maoist letter to Sudhir Mahto said: "Stop spreading wrong information about us, otherwise you will face the music . . . we feel it is right to challenge your statements and warn you against letting loose a barrage of lies cooked up on the dictates of corporate houses, native and foreign, and the landed gentry in order to cover the failures of your government." The Maoists also warned the Deputy Chief Minister to stop supporting village defense committees, or "face the ire" of the Maoists. (Note: South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR) offers additional details on recent Maoist activities in

KOLKATA 00000144 004.2 OF 005

Bihar and Jharkhand at
http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/5_5.htm#assessment2
End Note.)

The GOI Response - Bureaucracy and Inertia

¶14. (SBU) In June 2005, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs organized a meeting of the Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police of 13 States in Hyderabad and decided to create a joint task force of State police departments to counter Maoist activities in the six most-affected states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and Maharashtra. The GOI budgeted 510 million dollars for the task force, but

so far only roughly 220 million dollars has been utilized.

¶15. (SBU) Karnataka has targeted suspected Naxalite leaders while taking steps (albeit limited ones) directed at the root causes of the Naxalite problem. In 2005, a top leader belonging to the Karnataka State Committee of the People's War Group (PWG) was killed by police and another was apprehended. In districts with forest reserves where Naxalites operate, district commissioners have initiated special development programs enabling tribal communities to harvest forest products (e.g. wood, honey, and beeswax) in an effort to provide livelihoods. Police sources say that Naxalites continue to operate along Karnataka's borders with Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

¶16. (SBU) The government of Andhra Pradesh, however, has had considerable success in quelling the insurgency with an aggressive campaign against the Naxalites, which it commenced in 2005 after the Naxalites withdrew from peace negotiations (Reftel C). A senior police official said that the Naxalites are no longer able to move about in large groups but must do so in groups of two to three persons. He added that while the Naxalites are still a threat, their ability to conduct large-scale attacks in Andhra Pradesh has been diminished. The police official reports good cooperation with the authorities in the neighboring state of Chhattisgarh but said that Naxalite movement on the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border remains a major concern. (Note: Due to the effectiveness of the "Greyhound" paramilitary units in Andhra Pradesh the Maoists followed the path of least resistance to Chhattisgarh, where the vast majority of India's attacks now take place. From Jan 2006 through April 19, 2007, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, Chhattisgarh has had 480 Naxalite related deaths. End note).

¶17. (SBU) A High-Level Coordination Center, headed by the Union Home Secretary with Chief Secretaries and police chiefs of Maoist affected states as members, meets regularly and reviews and coordinates steps taken by the states to counter Maoist activities. The GOI in September 2006 created an Empowered Group of Ministers under the leadership of the Home Minister and selected Chief Ministers of Maoist-affected states to "closely monitor the spread of Naxalism and evolve effective strategies to deal with the problem." In addition, an Inter-ministerial Group headed by the Additional Home Secretary was created to monitor the progress on land reforms, tribal peoples' resettlement and rehabilitation, and review progress on development and infrastructure creation in tribal areas. A Standing Committee of Chief Ministers has also been created to maximize and improve the outputs of the various state action plans for anti-Maoist/Naxalite operations. A Naxal Management Division, headed by an Additional Home Secretary, is responsible for monitoring state action plans as well.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: The generally poor response to the Maoist/Naxalite menace is a result of weak Center-State and State-State relations in India. Operational effectiveness is lowered by the continuing inability of state law enforcement bodies to coordinate effectively with each other, and also by apparent disagreement over the best approach to take. Some states appear willing to talks with the Maoists, while others take a tougher stance. The GOI has publicly stated a "zero-tolerance" approach towards Maoist groups, but this policy is still not being implemented uniformly across the states. End Comment.

Links With Nepal

KOLKATA 00000144 005.2 OF 005

¶19. (SBU) The success of the Maoist movement in Nepal serves to inspire and possibly embolden Indian Maoists (Reftel G). While coordination between Nepali and Indian Maoists is limited, links between the two organizations clearly exist. Over the last few years, several key Nepali Maoists have been arrested while in

India to include CPNM Politburo Member Chandra Prakash Gajurel, Standing Committee Member Mohan Baidya, Central Committee Member and General Secretary of the All Nepal Peasant Organization Chitra Bahadur Shrestha and over 200 other CPNM members. In August 2006, the two Maoist groups issued a joint press release stating, "The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Communist Party of India (Maoist) jointly re-assert their firm commitment to proletarian internationalism, mutual fraternal relations." In discussions with Kolkata ConGen, a Kolkata-based Nepali diplomat said that he was aware of instances of Indian Maoists operating in Nepal, with their Nepali counterparts. A senior Bihar police official corroborated those comments, adding that movement by both groups across the porous border was common and that several Nepali Maoists were detained in Bihar jails. A more disturbing sign of possible Nepali Maoist activity in India was the previously noted March 31 attack on the Bihar border town of Riga. A group of approximately 200 Maoists, reportedly operating out of Nepal, assaulted a bank, police station and local government office, killing a security person and injuring six people. (Reftel A).

Comment

¶20. (SBU) The inability of the GOI to come to grips with Maoism and its persistence and spread is a reflection of the exclusion of a large percentage of the Indian population from development and governance. While much has been written regarding this phenomenon, experts have identified some basic causes. Due to Indian cultural biases, upper caste Hindus continue to relegate low caste, tribal and religious minority groups to perpetual inferiority and oppose efforts to introduce a more egalitarian social structure. In addition, the Indian ruling elite has a strong urban focus and has deliberately sidestepped the rural poor to favor the urban middle class. Endemic corruption also plays a role, as government officials managing programs aimed at addressing rural poverty often embezzle the funds, leaving only paper programs on the ground. A recent Nicholas Kristof cover story in the New York Times described his tour through rural India, where he found that villagers were not provided health care, education or basic health services, although the government funds programs in all these areas.

¶21. (SBU) Speaking to a gathering of Chief Ministers in April 2006, Prime Minister Singh emphasized that the Maoists constituted the most serious threat to India's internal security. The GOI and states' failure to respond to the Maoist insurgency should not be perceived to diminish the seriousness of the threat. Rather, the lack of a coherent counter-insurgency effort against the Maoists and the general lack of awareness about the insurgency further contribute to the danger in providing more time for the Maoists to extend their influence, which they have been doing in states such as Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. For some of the reasons enumerated above, Indian officials appear reluctant and incapable of confronting the Maoists and the fundamental issues that feed the insurgency: poverty, corruption and weak development. Outside the pockets benefiting from India's embrace of globalization remains a vast hinterland untouched by economic growth, with approximately 600 million people living on USD 2 a day or less. Unlike Islamic terror attacks, which receive wide coverage by the media and public officials, Maoist attacks elicit a muted reaction. The GOI can easily blame Islamic threats on Pakistan or other outside influences. The Maoist problem offers no such easy answers. To truly combat Maoism, the GOI would have make a critical assessment of the deplorable social conditions experienced by over two thirds of India's population, and that is an area where the Indian government does not want to go.

¶22. (U) This cable was coordinated with Amconsulate Mumbai, Amconsulate Chennai, and Embassy New Delhi.
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